

Republican Senators have stepped forward. Now the children across America and their parents are waiting on this Congress to act. And the question is, will this Congress give our constituents' children the same health care that their own children have?

DUTY CALLS US TO BE MORE THAN "SUNSHINE PATRIOTS"

(Mr. AKIN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. AKIN. Madam Speaker, during the War of Independence, Paine said: "These are the times that try men's souls. The summer soldier and the sunshine patriot will, in this crisis, shrink from service of their country . . ."

America is again at war, and duty calls us to be more than sunshine patriots.

I have been to Iraq. My son is a Marine captain who has been in Fallujah.

We have heard on the Armed Services Committee from scores of witnesses, liberals and conservatives and everything in between, and no one has offered a plan that is better than what we are currently executing in Iraq, and everyone agrees that a rapid withdrawal of troops will result in civil war and a regional conflict.

If the Democrats have a better plan, let them offer it. Otherwise, let our troops get the job done.

It is politically popular to sound retreat and to play the sunshine patriot, but duty, honor, and country demand that America stand for freedom once again. We must accept nothing less.

URGING REAUTHORIZATION OF SCHIP

(Mr. ALTMIRE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. ALTMIRE. Madam Speaker, today House Democrats unveiled the Children's Health and Medicare Protection Act. It was endorsed by the National Governors Association, a bipartisan group of our Nation's Governors, who just last week asked us for urgent action to reauthorize the Children's Health Insurance Program.

The SCHIP program that we are reauthorizing will ensure that millions of children have access to high-quality, cost-effective health insurance, and it will protect and strengthen the Medicare Trust Fund.

Now, while the President's budget underfunded this program, knocking 1 million children off of the rolls of the SCHIP program, I ask my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to join us in a bipartisan effort to show support for the SCHIP program and reauthorize and support the Children's Health and Medicare Protection Act.

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PROTECT LAKE MICHIGAN FROM BP DUMPING

(Mr. KIRK asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. KIRK. Today, bipartisan Representatives from Illinois will meet with Bob Malone, the chairman of BP North America. Why? Because Mr. Malone and his team want to increase their dumping of ammonia and suspended solids in our drinking water, Lake Michigan.

BP hired a consultant who told them what they wanted to hear, that despite being one of the most profitable companies on Earth and spending \$3 billion to upgrade their Indiana refinery, they can't find the space to prevent dumping in Lake Michigan.

This morning, the House will take up a bipartisan resolution condemning BP's plan to dump in Lake Michigan. I hope that BP will tell us today that they are reconsidering their plans. I hope they hear the voices of 2,700 Americans in my district that signed a petition against the BP dumping plan. I hope they hear the voice of 19 Republicans and Democrats that asked the EPA to pull the permit.

BP should hear the voice of the House this morning. If not, BP has to understand that our action this morning is only the opening step by action in the Congress to protect Lake Michigan.

DEMOCRATS' EFFORT TO INCREASE MINIMUM WAGE IS PART OF BROADER ECONOMIC AGENDA

(Mr. ARCURI asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. ARCURI. Madam Speaker, today marks the first time in a decade that those hardworking workers who earn minimum wage will receive a pay raise. Today, around the Nation, workers who have been paid \$5.15 for 10 years will finally get a boost in their pay. This wage increase will directly benefit low-income workers who need it most.

We should never forget that most minimum wage workers are adults who work to support themselves and their families, and many are single mothers who must work several jobs to make ends meet. And while some at the very top are primarily benefiting from the supposed economic recovery, most workers have seen very little economic progress. Average real wages are lower today than they were in 2001, even though productivity is up by 13 percent.

Madam Speaker, this wage increase is a great concrete step by the new Democratic-led Congress toward a broader agenda that will help us not only grow our economy, but ensure that every American benefits from that growth.

HONORING CHASKA, MINNESOTA FOR BEING NAMED ONE OF TOP TEN BEST PLACES TO LIVE

(Mr. KLINE of Minnesota asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. KLINE of Minnesota. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor and congratulate the community of Chaska, located southwest of the Twin Cities, and a town I'm proud to say is part of Minnesota's Second Congressional District.

Money magazine confirmed what many of us in the great State of Minnesota already knew by naming Chaska as one of the top 10 best places to live in America. Money magazine accurately describes Chaska as having both beauty and brains. A stroll downtown Chaska by City Square Park brings to life images from Norman Rockwell paintings, depicting all that is good about small town America. Chaska's small 19th-century downtown quickly yields to open fields, farmland and the Minnesota River. It is also home to innovation, with more than a dozen technology and biotech companies. It is no wonder why this town is a magnet for families who can find reasonably priced homes, low taxes and quality schools.

Congratulations again to the entire community of Chaska for earning this prestigious distinction. We in Minnesota's Second District are proud.

RAISING THE MINIMUM WAGE

(Mr. YARMUTH asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. YARMUTH. Madam Speaker, in this body, where we often discuss proposals to allocate millions or billions of dollars, it can become easy to lose sight of what just a few thousand dollars a year can do. But the increase in the minimum wage, the first part of which takes effect today, will make a major difference in the lives of America's working families. The extra \$4.400 per year that these families will bring home to their families will have a very tangible impact on their lives.

For families who have struggled too long without a raise, \$4,400 a year translates into 15 months of groceries, 19 months of paid utility bills, 20 months of child care, or well over 2 years of employer-provided health care. The extra money could even pay for 30 months of tuition at a public 2-year college, allowing these parents to get additional education or to help their children achieve their dream of attending college.

Madam Speaker, thanks to the Federal minimum wage increase passed by this Democratic Congress, nearly 13 million working Americans and more than 6 million children will have a chance at a better life. This fair and long overdue pay raise is an important first step in moving our Nation in a new economically healthy direction.